

Leventhal takes on critics

■ **Montgomery is not equipped to become 'bounty hunters' on illegal immigration, councilman tells talk show host, callers**

BY JANEL DAVIS
STAFF WRITER

On Tuesday morning, County Council President George L. Leventhal heard his name on the radio and called in to respond.

Leventhal's name was being bandied about by WMAL radio (630 AM) host Chris Core and his listeners on the subject of illegal immigration, and the callers were angry.

The discussion stemmed from an e-mail Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park sent in response to questions on immigration. The e-mail says that Core and CNN's Lou Dobbs have found that the issue "inflames and excites their audiences and elevates their Nielsen and Arbitron ratings."

"The responses from my message were overwhelmingly positive, then this morning I began receiving negative responses," Leventhal told The Gazette. "I turned on the program

this morning, called in and went on the air. I believe in what I wrote. I don't think the county is being overwhelmed by foreign invaders."

Core, a Chevy Chase resident, opened his phone lines to Montgomery County residents during a short question-and-answer session with Leventhal. The handful of callers — all lobbying the county to crack down on illegal immigrants — challenged Leventhal's assessment that the county is not responsible for enforcing federal immigration rules. One caller suggested that the county fine employers \$10,000 for hiring illegal workers, and another recommended using residents and parks department employees to "round up" illegal immigrants.

Leventhal did admit that people living illegally in the United States are breaking the law, but said that each situation should be judged individually.